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Federation of Canadian Municipalities Launches National Action Plan for Housing

(Vancouver, BC, January 23, 2008) - With thousands of Canadian families struggling to find an affordable place to live and federal housing funds scheduled to end in March 2009, Canada urgently needs a renewed funding commitment and a national housing plan led by the Federal government.

That was the message today as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) released its National Action Plan for Housing at a news conference led by Mayors Sam Sullivan of Vancouver, BC and Anne Marie DeCicco-Best of London, ON, Co-Chairs of the FCM Big City Mayors' Caucus Working Group on Housing.

"Too many Canadians are forced to choose between food and rent, clothes for the kids or making the mortgage payment," said Mayor Sullivan. "The high cost of housing also undermines the ability of people who want to get ahead but cannot, because they cannot afford a secure and decent place to live."

An FCM report released last week confirmed earlier and troubling trends, most notably that finding adequate housing was becoming an issue even for the so-called middle class and chronic, systemic homelessness continues in Canada's urban areas.

"This Action Plan was developed with the participation of municipal leaders across the country," said Mayor DeCicco-Best. "We will share the plan with the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Housing, who will hold their annual meeting here in Vancouver in February. We urge all governments to take ownership of these issues and work with municipalities to find a lasting solution."

The Plan examines three investment scenarios, each designed to meet our goals. FCM's preferred option is the mid-range one of $3.35 billion annually, which requires only marginal increase over current spending. These costs would be shared by the Federal and Provincial or Territorial governments, with municipalities also playing an active role through local strategies.

"We are deeply concerned about the upcoming expiry of all Federal housing programs in March 2009," said FCM President Gord Steeves. "There is no choice. The Federal government must put an end to the chronic uncertainty around affordable housing and play a strong leadership role by committing to a long-term strategy working with provinces and municipalities, as well as the community sector. Today we are proposing an ambitious, but realistic plan to address these most pressing problems."